



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



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Alok Bhatt

Wednesday, March 12 2014

Dear Chairman Tercyak, Chairman Holder-Winfield, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC/the Commission). The Connecticut General Assembly established APAAC in 2008 to engage and advocate for our state's Asian Pacific American (APA) population. This population consists of peoples originating from over 62 countries, who speak more than 100 distinct languages and dialects.

In recognizing the rights of aspiring citizens, APAAC writes in strong support of SB-371: An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers.

APAAC believes in the right of Connecticut residents to freedom from fear. This basic right must persevere in the workplace, regardless of employees' immigration status. While many APAs have successfully integrated into the labor force with self-determination intact, others in the APA community continue to struggle with exploitative working conditions and various forms of mistreatment.

As Asian immigration into Connecticut increases, and as immigrant communities continue to influence Connecticut's cultural and economic characteristics, the legislature must act to afford working immigrants their basic human rights. Consistent with this position, APAAC commends the language of SB-371 allowing workers to "file a complaint with the Labor Commissioner alleging violation...[by an employer]", and charging the Commissioner to "investigate such a complaint and [possibly] hold a hearing". Insulating workers from prejudicial employer practices and enabling public discussion represent positive steps towards reducing apprehensions in the immigrant community.

Connecticut is home to nearly 52,400 non-citizen APA residents. With total APA unemployment in Connecticut at 8%, we can deduce that many APA non-citizens hold jobs in the state. Fear of retaliation, particularly against immigration status, has historically deterred APAs from raising concerns with labor violations. We must not allow entire communities to remain effectively excluded from basic labor rights, and

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ultimately the exercise of human rights.

In reinforcing the right of Connecticut APAs to earn their living peaceably, APAAC supports SB-371.

We thank you greatly for your time and consideration of this significant matter.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt

Legislative Analyst, Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

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